

# Mp3 Eric Wainaina - Twende Twende!

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Original music from Kenya's leading songwriter. Soaring guitar lines, pulsating drum rhythms and excellent vocals from a Kenyan who doesn't run. Lyrics in Swahili, English and Kikuyu and Luo. 13 MP3 Songs WORLD: African, POP: with Live-band Production Details: C O M I N G S O O N !!! U.S. release: Novemeber 2007. Eric Wainaina (born 28 August 1973) is a Kenyan Kora Award-winning singer-songwriter whose career was launched with his debut album, *Sawa Sawa*, in 2001. Wainaina's music is a blend of Kenyan Benga rhythm and East African guitars, with some modern harmony. Wainaina was born in Nairobi, Kenya, to George Gitau Wainaina and Margaret Wangari Wainaina. He has one brother, Simon Wainaina. His love for music started at a young age. He got a piano at age 4, originally intended for his brother Simon who instead took keen interest in football. Wainaina thus grudgingly took piano lessons. He actively participated in choir throughout elementary and high school at St. Marys School, Nairobi, save for a short stint in basketball. Whilst growing up, Wainaina was influenced musically by international artists such as Papa Wemba, Youssou N'Dour, Lokua Kanza and Paul Simon. Wainaina first stepped into the world of music with Five Alive, a gospel a cappella group. Five Alive consisted of Victor Seii, Bob Kioko, Chris Kamau, and David Mageria, who was replaced by Joe Kiragu. They drew their musical influence from Ladysmith Black Mambazo and Take 6. Dominating Kenya's airwaves in 1995, Five Alive released their debut album *Five Alive* in 1996, and even went on to tour Europe the same year. His experience with the group convinced Wainaina to pursue a professional career in music. In 1996 he performed and appeared in the video for *Get in the Drivers Seat*, a song commissioned by the United Nations Drug Control Programme for a highly successful anti-drug campaign spanning 20 countries. This not only set the stage for his eventual emergence as a solo artist, but also got him into the social concern and activism that characterizes much of his music. When the group disbanded in 1997, Wainaina went on to join the Berklee College of Music in Boston USA, from which he graduated with a degree in Music, majoring in Songwriting and Record Engineering. He graduated with honours. During his years at Berklee, Wainaina and his band traveled to different parts of the country to perform, as well as holding regular shows in Boston. Together with his producer, Christian Kaufmann, he

worked to produce a sound that would be distinctively Kenyan both in the music and the content of the lyrics. In order to do this, he made sure that he released a new track every time he returned home for vacation, This was well received by his growing fanbase, with his performance at Kenya's 'Beats of the Season concert in December 2000 being watched live by 15,000 fans and broadcast nationally. His notable releases include 'Kenya Only', a song that instantly made him Kenya's favourite modern musician. After the 1998 terrorist bombing in Nairobi where over 200 Kenyans lost their lives, 'Kenya Only' was adopted as the unofficial song of mourning, receiving extensive radio and TV airplay nation-wide. His adaptation of a Kikuyu folk tune 'Ritwa Riaku' was added to the playlist of every radio station in the nation soon after. Wainaina returned to the top of Kenya's musical agenda after he released 'Nchi ya Kitu Kidogo' (Land of Bribes in Kiswahili) in 2001, a song that launched his crusade against rampant corruption in the country. With the chart success of 'Nchi ya Kitu Kidogo', Wainaina received international accolades. Transparency International (Kenya) supported him as an artist who would help educate people on the negativity of corruption, appointing him an ambassador. He was also appointed Ambassador for the Kenya Human Rights Commission and by the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights for his commitment to fighting the abuses to justice through music. This anthem against corruption (Nchi ya Kitu Kidogo) was not so highly appreciated in all quarters, however, with the government of the day putting up resistance to it by refusing to air it on the national broadcaster, Kenya Broadcasting Corporation. In one instance several attempts were made to keep him from performing at a national event, the Kenya Music Festival, including intimidation and attempts to switch off his microphone. Following the suspicious death of Father Anthony Kaiser in 2003 , Wainaina was commissioned by the Mill Hill Fathers to write a song about this. This became Ukweli, a call for justice despite efforts that were being made to cover up the true nature of Father Kaisers death, which was reported as suicide despite strong evidence to the contrary. In 2001, Africa Almanac listed him amongst the top 100 Africans of the year 2000, which included high profile names such as Nelson Mandela, Joseph Kabila, Yash Pal Ghai, Baaba Maal and Ousmane Sembene. His first record, Sawa Sawa, released in 2001, remains one of the highest-selling solo albums in the country. Wainaina returned home from Berklee in August 2002 after his graduation with two degrees. He was also honored with the Jack Maher award for his exceptional performance as a songwriter. The annual award is given to students who have been recognized for their potential to become leaders in the international music industry. Wainaina's music receives international

appeal. He received the MNET (South Africa) award for favourite male vocalist in February 2001, and was one of the first Kenyans to receive an award for Best East African Artist at the pan-African 7th Annual KORA All Africa Music Awards on 2nd November 2002. He is also the only Kenyan artist to have performed live at the KORA ceremony. He was nominated for another KORA Award in 2003, and in 2005 he received his third Kora nomination, this time for the prestigious Artist of the Decade award. In 2002, he played at the launch of the International Criminal Court at the UN Headquarters in New York, presided over by Kofi Annan. He has toured in Switzerland for 4 consecutive years and has performed at Hollands Festival Mundial (2003) as well as Harare International Festival of the Arts(HIFA) (2003), receiving outstanding reviews for both performances. He also performed at the 2004 Sauti za Busara festival in Zanzibar, a celebration of East African Music. In December 2004 Wainaina premiered a 21- song musical theatre piece, Lwanda, Man of Stone, based on a local folk story. One of the first of its kind in Kenya, the show ran for a hugely successful theatre season, and a concert version of the same show continues to be performed at major cultural events. The musical is set to open at the GoDown Arts Centre in November 2006. Together with Mumbi Kaigwa and Andrea Kalima, Eric co-wrote and arranged the music for Kigezi Ndoto, a Kenyan play written and directed by Kaigwa, which went on tour in Europe under the auspices of the World Theatre Music Festival- 2006. He has also written the music for Owen Mzee, an upcoming documentary about the touching story of an unusual friendship between a tortoise and a baby hippo at the Kenyan coast. This documentary is based on a best-selling childrens book by the same name. Wainaina was involved in the 2006 launch of Kenyas National Civic Education Program (NCEP II), Uraia, which aims at fostering a mature political culture in Kenya: a culture in which citizens are able to exercise their rights and responsibilities and to participate effectively in the broadening of democracy. Wainaina also performed at the inaugural Nairobi-hosted North Sea Jazz Festival in February 2006, and is scheduled to perform at the Holland-based version of the same in July 2006.

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